

# Hotel F&B™

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## ARTISAN F&B: HOUSEMADE SEA SALT Like 9



By Michael Costa

What does your F&B program offer guests that they can't taste anywhere else? What gives them a true sense of place, emphasizing local, sustainable, "only available here" items?

At Terranea Resort in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, those questions are answered through a variety of onsite initiatives (apiaries, lemon trees, herb gardens) but one of their signature artisan products is housemade sea salt, using water from nearby Terranea Cove. The salt is sold via retail at the resort's Sea Beans coffee shop, and of course, it's used on menus throughout the property.



I recently spoke with Executive Chef Bernard Ibarra about how his sea salt is transformed and transported from cove to customer:

**Q: Why did you start making sea salt at Terranea?**

**Ibarra:** I come from the Basque country on the border of Spain and France, and during the summer when we would go to the beach, my mom would collect water from the ocean. She would do that every time, and at the end of the summer we would have plenty of salt. The area around Terranea looks very much like where I grew up, so that idea came back to me.



**Q: What is unique about the water in Terranea Cove?**

**Ibarra:** The water was rated 97 points out of 100 for quality by an independent agency, so I thought that was perfect to make an outstanding salt. I needed to know what types of minerals were in the water, so I made a test batch: I filtered some water from the cove, and after it evaporated I had a half-pound of salt. Then I sent samples of the salt and seawater to a lab, and the results came back as high-quality salt, and high-quality water. The salt tasted excellent, and had lots of magnesium, potassium, and iron.



**Q: What were your next steps?**

**Ibarra:** I designed a three-level salt pond—we call it the Salt Conservatory. It's made out of glass and each of the ponds is staggered so it's like a staircase, with each level about 6' x 4' and 1' deep. With that built, we can collect large amounts of water from the cove, filter it to remove any impurities, then pour it into the ponds. A few times a week I'll filter the water again so it stays as clean as possible, and makes the cleanest possible salt.

It takes about 2 1/2 weeks for the water to fully evaporate, and the result is a great quality sea salt. After that, we'll flavor it with herbs or fruits, and we also smoke it. Then we use it in our kitchens, on our menus, and we sell it at Sea Beans too.



**Q: How do you inform your guests that you make your own sea salt?**

**Ibarra:** We just started volume production last April, so we're in the process of integrating more prominent verbiage into our menus, but our servers will mention it, and because we sell it at Sea Beans, that creates additional interest and exposure independent from our restaurants.



**Q: What other products come from making sea salt?**

**Ibarra:** We harvest fleur de sel during the evaporation process, which blooms on top of the water and gives us another product to use. We also produce a salt crystal byproduct called nigari, which we use to make our own tofu.

Our salt is so pristine, and the flakes are beautiful. The lab that tests our water and salt sent me a microscope photo of our salt crystals, and they look like diamonds. It makes me so excited and proud that we craft such a top-of-the-line sea salt here at the resort, and we're using water right outside our doors.